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Devolin, Danielsen in race for warden

by CHAD INGRAM
Editor

Two members of Haliburton County council would like to be warden for 2021, meaning county councillors will participate in an election to determine who will become head of council for the upcoming year.

Haliburton County council consists of the mayors and deputy mayors of each of the county's four lower-tier municipalities. Each December, members select from amongst themselves the councillor who will serve as warden, the head of county council, for the upcoming year. Traditionally, this takes place at an in-person meeting, but amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, that election, and a subsequent inaugural meeting, will take place virtually.

During a Nov. 25 online council meeting, councillors received nomination forms from Minden Hills Mayor Brent Devolin and Algonquin Highlands Deputy Mayor Liz Danielsen, each expressing interest in occupying the warden's chair for 2021. Danielsen has been deputy mayor of Algonquin Highlands since 2010 and has served as warden for 2019 and 2020. Devolin has been mayor of Minden

see COUNCILLORS page 9



A sign of the season

Haliburton Highlands Secondary School Interact Club members Megan Klose, left, Logan Heaven and Jessica Lee (with Daniella Meraw out of frame) wave and cheer at passing cars during their special festive toy drive on Sunday, Nov. 29 on Bobcaygeon Road in downtown Minden. The Grade 12 students accepted cash, toys, hygiene products, clothes and various other items. Everything collected will be packaged into festive stockings, which will be distributed to those in need via the Haliburton 4Cs Food Bank. /DARREN LUM Staff

COVID-19 grounding snowbirds from annual migration

by DARREN LUM
Times Staff

While tens of thousands of snowbirds are choosing to head south to warmer climes this winter despite the rising rates of infection

and deaths from COVID-19 and the imposed restrictions for travel across the U.S. and Canada border, there are hundreds of thousands of seniors staying in the Great White North.

Three retired couples in the Highlands shared their reasons for staying and how

they'll make the adjustment to living in the county this winter.

Al and Wendy Aubry, Jon and Lois Dannewald, and Scotty and Jane Boyd, who know each other through playing tennis

see TRADING page 4

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Service delivery review recommends increased centralization

by CHAD INGRAM
Editor

The centralization of functions, harmonizing of regulations and creation of new staffing positions are repeated themes in the plethora of recommendations contained in a service delivery review for the County of Haliburton and its four lower-tier municipalities.

The county's municipal politicians – all of them, from all four townships – along with the five chief administrative officers from the county's governments received a presentation on the review from members of Toronto-based consulting firm StrategyCorp during a Zoom meeting on Nov. 25.

Heads of council and the CAOs, who'd formed the steering committee for the project, had received a run-through of the report a few days prior.

John Matheson, a principal with the consulting firm and the founder of its municipal affairs practice group, called the 140-page document "a piece of work that could potentially provide you with several years' worth of implementation opportunities, as opposed to a take-it-or-leave-it offer that you might be expected to hastily endorse. I think that's really important, because it should allow you to think about it in the way in which it's intended, which is a lot of ideas that could be of great value to the municipalities over time."

The recommendations come with accompanying timelines, spaced out for implementation between 2021 and 2026.

The county awarded the contract for the project to StrategyCorp in early March, the process somewhat delayed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The process included more than 100 interviews and workshops with elected officials and municipal staffers, including more than 35 interviews with councillors and more than 60 interviews with staff, as well as a handful of interviews with community stakeholders.

According to the document, if the recommendations therein were fully implemented, it would equate to approximately \$900,000 a year in operational and capital savings, although, as Matheson pointed out, this would not necessarily be found money, but rather money that could be redirected elsewhere to achieve better municipal operations.

"Nobody should read this as we can wave a magic wand and reduce taxes," he said. "But what we do think, is that you can get better value for money on some operations, and we do think you can use that to offset other pressures, so that you're spending it in better places."

"We were invited to come and work with the team, to try to find better ways of doing things, and not surprisingly, when you spend this kind of effort at it, we found some," Matheson continued.

The first phase of the project included a 235-page report with 66 "service profiles" throughout the county, and some 200 recommendations. Those recommendations were grouped into 12 high-priority categories in the final report.

"One of the things we pride ourselves on is writing reports where you have a fighting chance of wanting to implement them," Matheson said.

The 12 priorities identified in the report are: roads, bridges and drainage; fire services; waste management; co-ordinated building, septic and bylaw services; planning services; economic development; collaborative procurement; integrated digital strategy; co-ordinated legal services; human resources co-ordination; communications; and overall co-ordination.

Under roads, bridges and drainage, some recommendations included the bundling of capital projects, joint engineering contracts, as well as formalizing joint planning of road maintenance and public works planning among the four lower tiers and the county. For fire services, the report recommends integrated training, including exploring the possibility of a joint training facility. Each of the four lower-tier municipalities operates its own fire department.

Under waste management, it's recommended that waste disposal policies be standardized across the county, so that aspects such as operating hours, tipping fees, bag limit restrictions, etc., are identical throughout the county. "Differences in policies and waste acceptance criteria was identified as a major issue across Haliburton, leading to confusion for residents, contractors and staff," the report reads. "Harmonization of policies and waste management approaches, where opportunities exist, can lead to decreased confusion and increased compliance." It also recommends joint contracts for waste disposal services.

For the co-ordination of building, septic and bylaw services, it was recommended that shared service agreements between the municipalities be created, or that a central service be created, where say a central staff of five inspectors would



Councillors and municipal chief administrative officers from throughout the county receive a service delivery review for the county and its lower tiers during a special Nov. 25 meeting. /Screenshot

be responsible for building and septic inspections throughout the county, which consultants stressed would mean efficiencies achieved by responding to route optimization and demand, rather than abiding by municipal boundaries.

A host of recommendations are included under the planning section, including standardizing all processes and fees across the county's municipalities. It was mentioned that Minden Hills has the simplest and most straightforward pre-consultation process, for example, and so one suggestion was that it become the standard model throughout the county.

"I see excitement and willingness to explore collaboration," consultant Chris Salloum said of planning staff in the county. Another recommendation was the hiring of a junior planner to alleviate pressure on planning staff, with those costs shared by the municipalities based on working hours. One of the county's townships, Highlands East, does not have an in-house planning department, using a planning consultant instead.

Planning is a complicated field, and Matheson said the firm has done entire studies solely focused on the planning operations of municipalities.

"There's a lot more that could be done, which was outside of the scope of this project," he said.

On economic development, the report recommends the county create an economic development officer position, something it is currently without.

"It's looking at a service increase, but it's for justified reasons," Salloum said. "... The county has a tourism service ... but the county lacks an economic development function."

At one point, what is now the county tourism department, which focuses mainly on marketing, was the tourism and economic development department. In 2013, county council at the time decided a revamped department would focus on tourism marketing, leaving the job of economic development to the lower-tier municipalities, which have done varying degrees of economic development work over the years. "There's tremendous benefit to be realized here," Salloum said.

As for collective procurement, it's recommended a procurement specialist be hired, someone who would basically handle all of the requests for proposals and buying of goods for the county and the four municipalities. Purchasing is typically managed by department heads, and since it's a cumbersome process, would alleviate pressure on staff as well as achieve saving through collective buying, the report indicates.

Recommendations for an integrated digital strategy include sharing platforms and solutions where possible, as well as involving IT staff in a five-year planning process to eliminate the ad hoc purchase of IT items.

As for co-ordinated legal services, it is recommended that an in-house barrister and solicitor be hired for the county and the townships. Currently, municipalities each contract out legal services on an as-needed basis, and the report indicates that having an in-house lawyer could save about \$70,000 a year.

Under human resource co-ordination, it's recommended the municipalities pool their employee benefits, which would lower premiums, rather than having each municipality con-

“

Nobody should read this as we can wave a magic wand and reduce taxes.

— JOHN MATHESON, STRATEGYCORP

”

tinue to provide employee benefits in a different way. Among other recommendations is the creation of shared services agreement for certain HR functions.

Under communications, the report recommends creating a joint communications officer/grant writer position. "The Haliburton municipalities have identified gaps in their ability to deliver co-ordinated communications to residents," it reads. "The communication initiative would address this gap by creating a [full time equivalent employee] dedicated to communications and grant writing. This position would focus on internal and external communications support for all Haliburton municipalities. The remaining time associated with this FTE would be dedicated to grant writing. This would address both a perceived gap in county-wide communications management and offset the costs of the new position through enhanced grant revenue."

Finally, under co-ordination, it's recommended that a special committee of council or inter-municipal body of some sort be created, which would focus on promoting collaborative efforts.

The report was received for information. As for next steps, Dysart et al Mayor Andrea Roberts said she'd like to have an opportunity for Dysart council to discuss what it considers to be the top priorities. "That may be a really good idea," said Algonquin Highlands Deputy Mayor and County Warden Liz Danielsen. Danielsen also suggested that the topic should be placed on the county council agenda as a standing item, and said she'd like to see a special county council meeting dedicated to the subject as soon as January, or February at latest. "It's one of those how do you eat an elephant type of things."

"Some of it isn't new," Algonquin Highlands Mayor Carol Moffatt said of the contents of the report, pointing out that the county had once had an economic development function, for example, or that Algonquin Highlands township had previously suggested the idea of a joint fire training officer. "It depends on every one of us [elected officials] to concede something for the greater good."

The \$150,000 project was funded through modernization funding from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Haliburton County's kids turn living rooms into science labs

by SUE TIFFIN
Times Staff

An audible “wow” might have been heard across Haliburton County on the morning of Nov. 30, as kids saw right before their eyes the chemical reaction that takes place when vitamin C and baking soda are mixed with cabbage water.

More than 20 families participated in the Scientists in School virtual presentation together, with kids in one household sharing the limited number of kits available so that more could participate. Organized by Robin Dillane through a local parenting community Facebook page, the presentation was offered free of charge due to a donation from an anonymous person who saw her post organizing the session online and offered to pay the cost of the event so everyone could take part without worrying about a fee. Participants picked up science kits containing all materials needed – including cups, containers, straw spoons, craft sticks, Epsom salts, flour, baking soda, vitamin C crystals and red cabbage powder – from the porch of Dillane's Minden home.

Dillane, mom to Michael, had been planning a similar presentation through school council at Stuart Baker Elementary School in the last school year, but when schools closed after the pandemic was declared, the in-person presentation had to be cancelled. When she saw a virtual presentation being offered to Guelph library patrons, she began organizing one for kids throughout Haliburton County.

“Information just seems to find me, so no idea how I saw the Facebook post for the Guelph library,” she laughed.

Kids from all corners of the county took part, including members of the homeschooling community, and those learning at home through the TLDSB online learning program. Students ranged in age, with three-year-olds and teenagers all following along with an online educator – and a little help from parents at home – together. “So far I have heard good feedback,” said Dillane after the presentation. “I hope that everyone had fun and learned something new.”

Response was quick from participants that another presentation would be welcome in the new year.



Owen Archer and Beth Allin took part in the virtual Scientists in School presentation on Nov. 30 from Algonquin Highlands, joining homeschooling kids throughout the county in conducting experiments. /Submitted

“I think it went well, the scientists are very easy to work with and all the parents and kids have been so supportive, picking up kits, and making sure they were logged in and were ready to participate,” said Dillane.

Families interested in participating or donors interested in helping can contact Dillane at robindillane@haliburton-mortgages.com or via Facebook.



Michael Dillane mixes materials from a kit during a science presentation during an at-home virtual science lesson that more than 20 families learning at home around Haliburton County took part in. /Submitted

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(VIRTUAL) COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council and Committee of the Whole meetings are currently being conducted virtually via web conference and Closed Session meetings via teleconference, until further notice. Meetings begin at 9:00 AM unless otherwise noted.

The schedule of upcoming meetings are:

December 10 – Regular Council Meeting and 1st Round 2021 Budget Deliberations

Please note Council Meetings are reduced to one (1) meeting a month in December. Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by joining a live-stream link available on the township website at www.mindenhill.ca/council/ or by using the direct link provided in the notice. We encourage those wishing to view the meeting to also download the agenda, as it will not be displayed during the streaming process. Meeting agendas can be downloaded by visiting our website at www.mindenhill.ca/council/. Please note the live-stream link provided for each meeting will only be activated while Council is in session.

RECYCLING TIP OF THE WEEK

Tricky Items – Take-out Coffee Cups go in your paper (fibre) stream. Remove the lid and place in the container stream. Styrofoam (food grade) should be bundled into a grocery bag and then goes in your paper (fibre) stream. Make sure it is rinsed and that the plastic and the absorbent pad is removed. Plastic bags check to see if they are stretchy. If they stretch, place them in your paper (fibre) stream. If they are crinkly and don't stretch, place them in the garbage.

RIVERWALK WINTER USAGE & WETLANDS BOARDWALK UPDATE

The Boardwalk is currently closed until further notice. The Logger's Crossing Bridge is cleared of snow regularly but is not sanded or salted. Residents are advised to “Exercise Caution” when using pathways as they could develop slippery conditions.



CHRISTMAS TOY DROP DRIVE THRU

Support our community this holiday season by donating non-perishable food items and new, unwrapped children's toys to the Minden Food Bank Christmas Hamper Program.

Donations can be dropped off at the Minden Hills Community Centre (upper parking lot) on Sat Dec 5th between 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM.

This is a drive thru drop off. Please place items on tables set up outside the Community Centre doors. Volunteers will watch for and collect the items for the hampers. Tables will be sanitized between drop offs. Items in need this year include toys for all ages and gift cards for teenagers.

NOTICE – 2021 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

The Council of the Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills will commence its 2021 Budget deliberations during its combined COTW/Regular Council Meeting via web conference scheduled for December 10, 2020. The meeting will commence at 9:00 AM.

Trisha McKibbin, CAO/Clerk, 705-286-1260 ext. 505 tmckibbin@mindenhill.ca

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINDEN HILLS FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers do not replace the need to call Minden Hills Fire and Emergency Services. Always call 9-1-1 when a fire occurs, even a small fire. Fire extinguishers are not designed to fight large or spreading fires.

When should I use my extinguisher to fight a fire?

You should use your extinguisher to fight a fire only if:

- The fire is not large or spreading
- Occupants have been alerted
- Everyone has left or is leaving the building
- 9-1-1 has been called
- You have a clear escape route that won't be blocked by fire

- You know how to operate your extinguisher and are aware of its capabilities

Don't fight a fire in any other circumstance. Leave the premises immediately, close off the area and call 9-1-1 from a neighbour's home.

Where should I install my fire extinguisher?

Extinguishers should be installed in plain view, above the reach of children, near an escape route, and away from stoves and heating appliances.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

Everyone has to do their part to get around safely in the winter. When a winter storm is expected, all municipalities have a plan: First, hills and bridges are treated in advance of a storm to make them easier to plow.

As soon as snow begins, salt trucks head out and treat expressways and main roads first, followed by smaller routes.

Plowing begins in a similar order. With large snowfalls, plowing usually begins once the storm has ended.

Drivers need to have their own plan, which includes leaving earlier and planning a route. It is important to delay unnecessary travel during significant storms to give plows time to do their jobs. It's also safer for drivers.

WINTER SAND

Winter sand is now available at the upper parking lot of the S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Community Centre, by the Skate Park. Please note this is for Individual Use Only – No Commercial Users Please.

MINDEN FOOD BANK CHRISTMAS HAMPER PROGRAM

The Minden Food Bank Annual Christmas Hamper Program application begins on Nov 30th. Apply for a hamper by calling the Food Bank at 705-286-6400 between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM from Nov 30th to Dec 4th and Dec 7th to Dec 11th.

Hampers can be picked up on Monday Dec 21st between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM at the Minden Community Centre.

NEW for this year: Hamper pick up will be a Drive-Thru format. When you arrive at the Minden Community Centre, a volunteer will direct you to a parking space. Please have the I.D for everyone listed on your application ready.

A volunteer will bring your Christmas Hamper and toys outside and place them on a designated table beside your vehicle. Please remain in your vehicle until all products have been placed on the table. Once completed, you may get out and pack your items into your vehicle (NOTE: if you require assistance to lift, please bring someone to help you).

In order to ensure COVID GUIDELINES are being followed, volunteers will not be allowed to load items into vehicles and community members will not be allowed to enter the building. We ask that everyone respect these guidelines and wait in their vehicles in the line-up. Please note that there will be no used/new clothing available on hamper pick up day. A Christmas Boutique has been made available at the Food Bank on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM until December 20th.

For more information please contact the Foodbank at 705-286-6838

Trading golf clubs for ski poles

from page 1

together every week in the summer, are readying for a winter in the Highlands.

Unlike some snowbirds, who have hired transport companies to deliver RVs to southern destinations while they take a plane and fly into the U.S., the Aubrys didn't even consider options to go south to Florida like the past 22 years.

"We believe the pandemic is out of control in the U.S.A., and we don't wish to get on a plane any time soon," Al wrote. "We considered a winter in Kelowna and travel by private sleeper cabin on the train, but the long distance trains are not running and their return to service is not happening any time soon. So, we're here for the winter and will make the most of it."

Recently, he heard an anecdote, reminding him of how he and his wife made the correct decision to stay. A couple in the U.S. told him how they were turned away at a hospital because they were Canadian after one of them felt ill. Upon their return to Canada, it was later learned that the ill individual had contracted COVID-19.

The retired couple, who have been married for 48 years and have three adult children and seven grandchildren, have called the Highlands home since 2000 after cottaging for four years. After living on Boshkung Lake for the majority of their time, they've recently moved to Mountain Lake.

After spending winters playing tennis, golfing, taking walks on the beach, socializing with friends, both Canadian and American, the couple will be looking to snowshoe, ice skate and will curl for a full season in Haliburton unlike other years when they stopped at Christmas.



Jon and Lois of Haliburton have been going to Rio Grande Valley in Texas since 1999.

Last year, they only stayed for a month because they could only get out-of-country health insurance coverage for that amount of time, but when COVID-19 hit they sold their place and came home to Haliburton County.

With COVID-19 and getting older, the Dannewalds said going south this winter was not a possibility, particularly with how it was cost prohibitive.

"We have not considered going south for the winter anymore because of our age and medical conditions, out-of-country health insurance is too expensive," he wrote.

When they inquired about the premiums for insurance they were shocked by the quotes for five months of coverage, which would cost \$9,000 for Lois and \$2,700 for Jon. The difference, Jon wrote, was because of Lois's health history, having survived cancer. The other factor is both of them are over 76.

Without the high cost of insurance, Jon pointed out going south to Texas was actually cheaper than living here.

"We found it less expensive to winter in

For the first time in 22 years Al and Wendy Aubry are preparing to stay in Minden this winter and participate in winter sports such as snowshoeing. The retired couple of Minden, who have gone to Florida for the winter for the past two decades, are staying because of concerns related to the prevalence of COVID-19. /DARREN LUM Staff

Texas than to heat our home here, besides I had an allergy to snow, it hurt my back!" he wrote.

In Texas, they danced the nights away and socialized with friends. Typically they would leave before Halloween and returned on May 1. This year shuffleboard will have to wait and they'll trade golf clubs for ski poles and golf spikes for snowshoes.

"We had a good run of hot sun, sandy beaches, and wonderful golf courses for 20 years, now it's time to enjoy winter in Haliburton," he wrote.

The couple of 55 years have lived in Haliburton County since 2002.

They have four sons and four grandsons and soon-to-be eight great-grandchildren.

Up until last year, the couple lived in West Guilford.

They just moved to a condominium in Haliburton last year and it comes with some built in conveniences in dealing with winter such as a heated garage, which includes no snow to shovel, "lots of volunteer activity to keep busy."

Jon admits life here in the winter will be

a "major lifestyle change for us but we are looking forward to enjoying a Haliburton winter, change is as good as a rest."

Unlike the other couples, who have spent the winters in the south, the Boyds have only stayed for the month of April renting different condos over the past several years, but visiting the same golf club in Naples, Florida.

Last year, they didn't go and don't expect to go this year with the current situation of rising COVID-19 cases and the absence of a vaccine.

"We of course had to cancel last spring and this one as well. We miss it very much but it is not safe to go with the COVID situation. If there is a miracle and we get inoculated before April, we would head south," Jane wrote.

For the retired secondary school teacher, who lived much of her life in the Highlands having grown up in Minden and graduating from Archie Stouffer Elementary School and the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School, this is home. She left for study at Queens University and work, but with Scotty bought a cottage on Mountain Lake in 1998 and moved back in 2003.

They love winter sports such as curling, snowshoeing, Nordic skiing and skating, but find April a difficult month to get outside for athletics or for gardening. Going to Florida has helped with the transition from winter to spring.

There's a hope to travel this spring. Even if it's within Canada's borders.

"If we are here in April, hopefully we will be at a stage where travel is easier. Then we will visit family in Manitoba and maybe in B.C. Otherwise I will keep on running," she wrote.

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25th Annual Christmas Challenge

Join the Challenge and help us to make a difference

This year is going to be a challenge for everyone as we adapt to the Covid-19 protocols.

Even though you will likely not be having your annual staff party you can still be a part of The Haliburton County Home Builders' Christmas Challenge.



STEP 1:

Call in advance to the Home Builders Office 457-6901, Members of the Home Builders Association will pick up your gifts and deliver them to the workshops in Haliburton, Minden & Wilberforce. Porch pick up & delivery will be available for all.



STEP 2:

Collect unwrapped toys or food items at your home or office.



REMEMBER to make the most of the Challenge

have your gifts ready for pick up **BEFORE** December 10th. Early delivery to the workshops means the elves have enough time to prepare for gifts for Covid and Christmas.

This is the **25th anniversary of the Christmas Challenge.**

Whether this is the first year you have taken the challenge or the 25th year all gifts are needed. If you aren't sure what to collect simply gather local gift certificates.

A value of \$15.00 each makes it easy to top up gifts for families who have teenagers.

Call 705-457-6901

for more information and to book your gift pick up.



Annual Christmas Challenge hits milestone in unforgettable year

by **DARREN LUM**
Times Staff

After 25 years the need for the Haliburton County Home Builders Association's Annual Christmas Challenge couldn't be more relevant, as the community continues to endure the effects of the pandemic.

The challenge invites the public to donate and encourages businesses to collect the most items, whether it's food or unwrapped toys for children and other assorted goods or gift cards for youth, which help fill the Christmas packages for people in need, as organized by the 4Cs in Haliburton, the Minden Community Food Centre and The Central Food Network in Highlands East.

HCHBA executive officer Aggie Tose said the need is greater this year than any other.

"Considering the financial challenges that this whole county is facing, yeah, it's pretty bad this year. I know us in construction we've been very lucky and our people are still working. The teaching profession are still working and most of the retail stores, but they've cut staff. There's all sorts of cuts everywhere so I just think this is a big year for people to step in and help if they can," she said.

Call the home builders at (705)-457-6901 for more information and to book a pick up. They will take your donations and take them to the different food banks.

Tose has been part of the challenge since it started after she presented the idea to the home builders' executive more than two dozen years ago. Over the years there have been greater cash donations made, which enables

food banks added flexibility to purchase what is needed.

Don't forget the teenagers, Tose said.

"It's wonderful and easy to buy for young people, like little ones. Sometimes it's more of a challenge for the teenagers, but it's still Christmas for them," she said.

Generally, gift cards are suitable for youth.

She recommended gift cards from local spas so teens can pay for services, and local eateries close to the high school such as Subway, 241 Pizza or Head Lake Grill. A value of \$15 is suggested.

Twenty-five years of existence represents the strength of the trades in the Highlands.

There is a community of businesses under the home builders' banner and they are supported by the hard work of more than a thousand people, who appreciate the prosperity they have experienced here and this effort enables them to be able to give back.

"I think we're pretty grateful to be able to continue this every year and be able to employ this many people and to be able to give back to the community that we're all a part of," she said.

With COVID-19 concerns, she said the Minden Community Food Centre will be organizing the donated items starting this weekend to ensure items have the chance to be quarantined for a time.

Her message to anyone wanting to donate in Minden is to get donations in before this weekend.

"And if not, certainly give the home builders phone number a call and we can arrange for either a drop off or pick up somewhere," she said.

The collected items on the weekend will be

the first things given away. Anything donated after the weekend, but before the deadline of Dec. 10 will be given later.

This does not apply to donations made in Haliburton and Wilberforce, she said. She encourages collections to be ready for pickup before the Dec. 10 due date.

Tose acknowledges the hardships the community is facing and how it could influence

the number of donations that are made, but believes the Highlands residents will come through for their neighbours.

"I think it's in the back of your mind, but I think we also know that we have an amazing community and those that can are going to step up and help," she said.

Decking the halls at Shindig

Kate Campbell and Nicholas Russell graced the Dominion Hotel with the sound of music during the Haliburton Highlands Christmas Shindig on Nov. 28. The event was a fundraiser for Fuel for Warmth, and was live-streamed from three locations in the county, raising more than \$40,000. /Photo submitted by Jack Brezina



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IN OTHER WORDS

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Willingness to change

HOW DO you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

That adage is frequently used by a number of local municipal politicians and now the elephant is on the table in all its glory, with the receipt of the service delivery review for Haliburton County and its lower-tier municipalities last week.

If there is not going to be single-tier governance in the county, then certainly many of the recommendations contained in that report should be implemented in the coming years. As I've written in this space before, the biggest argument for amalgamation is not financial it is functional. A single-tier government would mitigate the amount of redundancy and repetition that takes place within the current system.

The recommendations in the review report would also do that, calling for standardization and centralization of numerous municipal policies and functions in a planned, collaborative framework involving the five local governments.

At some 140 pages, there are a lot of ideas in the report and a lot of them are very good. A centralized economic development department. A central building, septic and bylaw service. Centralized fire services training. Standardized landfill operations, so that hours, tipping fees, rules, etc. are the same across the board, regardless of which municipality you're in. Standardized planning fees and

processes. On and on. None of this stuff is revelatory; it is merely logical, and it should be put into practice.

Putting things into practice will be the tricky part. Certainly, while some of the suggested collaborations would be relatively easy to implement, in some cases, reorganizing and restructuring of departments and operations would be more complicated.

The other hurdle is that councillors must now agree on which of the many recommendations are the biggest priorities, and along what timelines which priorities should be completed. The consultants' report suggests staggered timelines between 2021 and 2026, and while there



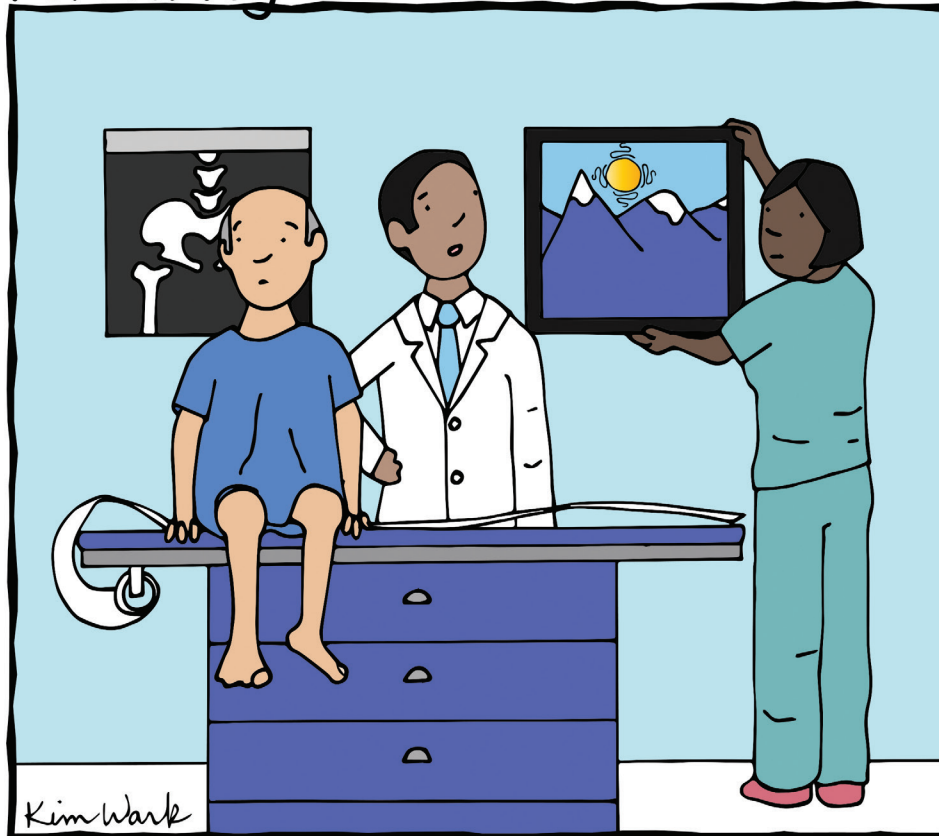
CHAD INGRAM
Editor

are specific suggestions, it also notes that councillors are likely better positioned to decide which initiatives should be dealt with first.

Where things go from here is up to councillors, and the first step, the very first step, is not an action at all – it's a state of mind. The first step is willingness to change, a true open-mindedness to the potential of formalized collaboration and centralizing of services. That means letting go of territorial notions, or any sense of ego, or sentimental attachments to the way things have traditionally been done.

Change is never easy, and these ones won't be either, but there's a lot of good stuff in that report, things that should be implemented for the betterment of the community.

Kwarky



"Oh no! That does not look good."

Of mittens and men

MOST CANADIANS do not consider mittens that are attached together by a string as the type of garment that an adult would or should wear.

There's good reason for this too.

After all, these were the things that your mother foisted upon you, until you proved that you were responsible enough to not lose mittens. Or at least tell her that every time she calls.

Worse still, this style of mitten screams out, "I lose so many mittens that someone had to intervene and attach a string which I have to thread through both arms of my coat." And while that's cute on someone in second grade, it's a little less flattering when you are in your 50s – especially when it's true.

For the outdoorsman, however, mittens attached by a string can actually be a practical piece of kit. After all, there are times when you are in the outdoors in winter, such as when tying on an ice fishing lure, trying to ignite a lighter or un-attaching your tongue from a metal pole, when mittens have to come off temporarily so that nimble fingers can do the task or at least text a friend or EMT Unit for help.

In these cases, mittens attached by a string are the perfect solution. That's because the mitts are right there, hanging within inches of your hands. And when you are done with the job, no time is wasted getting them back on. That's a plus when temperatures get cold.

Unfortunately, I do not know a single outdoorsman who wears mittens attached with strings. I suspect this is because of the stigma associated with them.

But, as I said, there are many good reasons why a fully grown outdoorsman could and should take advantage of the benefits that mittens attached by strings provide. Yes, they create a perception that your mother dressed you, but again, this is not always disadvantageous.

For instance, if you wear mittens attached together with strings, no one is ever going to ask you to use a power auger or any other sharp tool. Nor will they get too angry when you accidentally step in their minnow bucket.

Even so, I know many outdoorsmen who would rather go bare-handed than wear their mittens in this manner – no matter how practical it is.

And, I will be honest here, I happen to be one of them.

Deep down, I know that this design prevents loss, is highly practical and ultimately more useful in keeping hands warm and dry. But every time I have taken my mittens attached by

a string afield, some wise guy has made a comment or two that has made me feel a little more self-conscious than I'd prefer.

They'll say things like, "You know you wouldn't trip as much if you shortened the strings." Or "You'd have far more mobility if you just wore those mitts on the right hands." Or worst of all, "Why the heck would you ever lick a metal post?"

Stuff like that.

The point here is there are also plenty of good reasons to reject wearing mittens with strings too – not the least of which, is that my mom is really good at knitting and no longer asks why I want three right hand mittens.

Nor does she want anything in return. She just knits them. No strings attached.



STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

IN OTHER WORDS

Columns and Letters to the Editor

Size doesn't matter

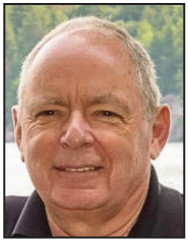
THE NEXT time someone calls you a bird brain, take it as a compliment. That's become a cliché as scientists discover more evidence that birds are smarter than we believe.

Birds do have small brains, larger ones the size of a walnut, the smaller ones perhaps smaller than an unshelled peanut. In comparison, the brains of some monkeys are the size of a lemon.

Scientists have discovered, however, that size really doesn't matter.

Bird brains are wired differently than those of other creatures. They have more cells packed into a smaller space and higher brain neuron counts than mammals or primates.

Neurons transmit information between different parts of the brain and between the brain and the nervous system.



JIM POLING SR.

From Shaman's Rock

One 2019 study showed that ravens process visual information faster than humans. In the study, ravens took only half as long as humans to glance at a collection of objects and pick one that they wanted.

I didn't need an elaborate scientific study to tell me that. A few years back I left the contents of my pants pockets, including my car keys, on a table on the cottage deck. When I returned to the deck, I saw a raven flying off with something in its beak.

I haven't seen those keys since.

The information about the 2019 study, plus much other research, is contained in a new book by nature author Jennifer Ackerman. It is titled *The Bird Way* and is a follow-up to *The Genius of Birds*, her 2016 book highlighting new discoveries about bird intelligence.

Ackerman writes that scientific studies, and her own observations of birds around the world, have provided a better understanding of birds and their behaviours – an understanding that is pushing aside our mistaken biases and assumptions.

For instance, many of us see some birds as aggressive creatures, fighting each other for territory and for food. In fact, birds can be extremely co-operative, raising the young of other birds, and working together in hunting insects and other small prey.

Ackerman writes that birds use their voices to resolve disputes, negotiate boundaries and spread word about sources of food and danger.

The Bird Way is packed with much interesting information about the ways and intelligence of birds. Some of it makes the reader smile.

Smiles fade, however, when Ackerman notes the ominous declines in bird populations.

One 2019 study found that over the past 25 years bird populations that depend on insects for food declined 13 percent in Europe and almost 30 percent in Denmark.

Scientists also reported last year that one in four birds in Canada and the U.S. have disappeared since 1970. That's nearly three billion birds.

Back in 2014 the Audubon Society predicted that one half of North American birds likely will go extinct within the next 50 years. Audubon said that, despite their intelligence, birds cannot adapt to the rapid pace of environmental change created by humans.

Audubon published updated research in 2019 showing that 389 North American bird species are vulnerable to extinction because of climate change. It lists increasing climate-related hazards as debilitating heat waves, increased wildfires, heavy rains and rising sea levels.

Audubon is not alone in its dire predictions. BirdLife International reported in its *State of the World's Birds 2018* that 40 per cent of the planet's 11,000 bird species are in decline. It said one in eight is threatened with global extinction.

Audubon has said that holding global warming to 1.5 Celsius above pre-industrial levels would mean about 150 bird species would no longer be vulnerable to extinction. And, 76 of all vulnerable species would be better off than they are today.

It is easy to believe that the world's human population never will make the sacrifices needed to reduce global warming. Easy when after nine months and 1.47 million deaths we can't accept and make the sacrifices required to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

But there is hope. Back in the 1960s, one woman and her book led to the banning of DDT, the most powerful and most damaging pesticide ever produced. Rachel Carson was considered a radical and her book, *Silent Spring*, was called inflammatory but her meticulous research and powerful writing convinced people and governments that DDT was a danger that must be eliminated.

Comfort Zone Part 2 - Movement (and pushing the boundaries)

HERE'S A TRUTH for you: Any movement that you are not doing now you will not be able to do in the future. One example is getting down to the floor and back up again. Now, let's use the definition of comfort zone: A place or situation where one feels safe or at ease and without stress. If that's the case the question becomes, does the thought of doing this movement, or another movement, create a level of discomfort for you? If it does it's a great place to start pushing some boundaries.

There is a fear associated with moving outside the comfort zone. Staying within the comfort zone is a great place to be, but sometimes accidents happen that force us out there and we're not prepared. Situations like that often lead to injury and pain. There's nothing comfortable

about that. If we go back to our example of being on the ground we'll likely see that the fear of being on the ground is having the ability to stand up again.

One of the activities I absolutely love doing with my clients is having them get down to the floor and back up. This is a huge undertaking for some so we break it down a little at a time. It is a very individual process. Some people can only get down part way so we start with what they can do by using a footstool to kneel on while holding on to something secure. Gradually, as their bodies become more mobile they get closer and closer to the ground (pillows are a useful tool at this stage). The resistance of gravity makes them stronger for the getting up process. Bit by bit as their bodies adapt the comfort zone boundary moves out.

This progressive method can be used for

just about any physical adaptation. It does start with figuring out where your limits are. From there you push them out a little at a time. I have found sitting on the floor has become increasingly comfortable for me. I have noticed that when I get up I always roll to the left. My body is much more agile on that side. To push myself I'm forcing myself to move right. It's nowhere near as easy (comfortable) to do that but I feel slight improvements happening.

People who train for sporting events are constantly pushing a comfort zone. Still there are always areas of improvement. Moving our bodies in every single direction they were meant to move should be our ongoing goal if we want to be able to move like that for the rest of our lives. Sure, aging makes it more challenging. In some ways I can't do what I

did 10 years ago but because I'm working on other movements I'm now more flexible than I was back then. I can now touch my toes. That has never happened before in my life. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Take some time this week to challenge your physical movement. In addition to stretching the limits of your body you will also be using your brain differently. That's two benefits with one activity.

Next week we look at pushing the boundaries when it comes to nutrition. Yum.

Something to think about

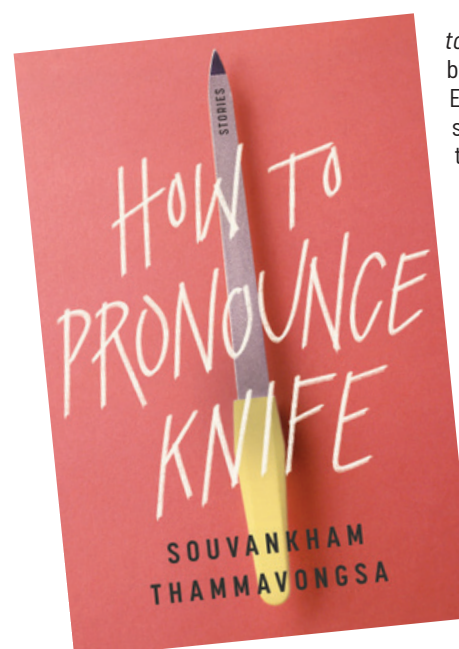
Laurie Sweig is a certified personal fitness trainer and spinning instructor. She owns and operates The Point for Fitness. She can be reached at laurie@thepointforfitness.com.



LAURIE SWEIG

Practical Fitness

Book of the month: December



Winner of the Scotiabank Giller award, *How to Pronounce Knife* is a short story compilation by debut author Souvankham Thammavongsa. Each poignant story focuses on characters struggling to find their bearings in unfamiliar territory, or shuttling between idioms, cultures, and values. A young girl brings a book home from school and asks her father to help her pronounce a tricky word. A failed boxer discovers what it truly means to be a champion when he starts painting nails at his sister's salon. A young woman tries to discern the invisible but immutable social hierarchies at a chicken processing plant. A mother coaches her daughter in the challenging art of worm harvesting. Simple exchanges, but with unforgettable consequences.

In a taut, visceral prose style that establishes her as one of the most striking and assured voices of her generation, Thammavongsa interrogates what it means to make a living, to work, and to

create meaning. You can check out a copy of *How to Pronounce Knife* from the Haliburton County Public Library.

‘Miracle drug’ helping Minden teen

by **SUE TIFFIN**
Times Staff

In November, families and advocates in the Canadian cystic fibrosis community were celebrating news reports that a drug already helping numerous people around the world who have the progressive, life-threatening genetic disease could become available in Canada.

Trikafta, a drug proving to be effective in treating 90 per cent of cases of cystic fibrosis, and which was approved by the U.S. federal drug agency last October, was submitted by manufacturer Vertex Pharmaceuticals for priority review status by Health Canada, which the health agency granted Nov. 16. It now needs to go through an approval process, and also have a price negotiated - it's listed as costing more than \$300,000 US per year - but the sometimes time-consuming approval process starting is life-changing news to more than 4,000 people in Canada living with cystic fibrosis.

Minden resident Ava Smith is one of those people - she knows exactly how much Trikafta can help, because she has been taking it for two years.

In October, 2018, the 16-year-old was one of two patients of SickKids with cystic fibrosis, which largely affects the digestive system and lungs, who were chosen to take part in an eight-month trial. Because it was a double blind study, Smith, as well as the team working with her, did not know if she was taking Trikafta, or the placebo. It became quickly apparent to Smith, her team, and Smith's family that she was using the medication.

"It was interesting to guess which one I was on, but it was pretty clear after the first three weeks that I was actually on the drug because my lung function improved very quickly," said Smith. "I wasn't coughing at all and I felt just generally more energetic, and my results in my pulmonary function test rapidly increased. All of a sudden it just felt easier, in a way."

Smith said her parents were convinced she was on Trikafta and not the placebo.

"We all knew," she said. And then, laughing: "We didn't want to jinx it, but we all knew."

Smith's mom, Cheryl Patterson-Smith, agrees that the physical results came quickly, although an official confirmation that Smith was taking Trikafta came months later.

"I just remember Rich [Ava's dad] and I commenting that we couldn't remember when we heard her cough, which was unheard of," she said. "I guess you just spend every day, you sort of get used to it. It just really dawned on us that we hadn't heard Ava



Trikafta has been helping people with cystic fibrosis, including Minden's Ava Smith have better quality of life. / Submitted

“

All of a sudden it just felt easier, in a way.

— AVA SMITH

”

chance of living to 52, which is the age I turn this year," she said. "Things like that are very ... they sort of make you realize that if this medication can extend, not only improve quality of life but also extend the life expectancy for people with CF, that's incredible."

Despite Smith's care for herself and support from her family, like most people living with CF, she still has breathing therapy every morning and night, and a regimen of vitamins and enzymes, which she continues to adhere to though feeling healthier because of Trikafta.

"The goal is finding some sort of cure for it, which hasn't been found yet, but this is the first medication that - all the other medications and therapies are trying to rid the bodies of the excess mucus, this is the first medication as I understand it that's actually addressing the production of the mucus," said Patterson-Smith. "It really is the closest thing that we're going to find, but it's not a cure. It still requires a lot of adherence to the medications and the therapies. Luckily she's one of those patients that does, even when she's feeling great, does still do her therapies."

The family has been in contact with other people who are also benefitting from the drug, including a fellow teenaged girl Smith met at the hospital who is on the list for a lung transplant, and whose lung function has been improving.

A study published by Dalhousie University, which was primarily funded by Cystic Fibrosis Canada, showed that with access to the drug as early as next year, 60 per cent fewer Canadians would be living with severe lung disease, while 19 per cent fewer hospitalizations or home intravenous courses for infections would be happening, and less of a need for lung transplants, as well.

"We're very fortunate, extremely fortunate, because she's been on this medication, we've seen these [positive] results," said Patterson-Smith. "It's so exciting to think that more of the CF population, I think it's 90 per cent, that the results we've seen in Ava could be available to virtually the entire population is unbelievable, it's so exciting."

The family is one of many hoping the drug is made available soon, and that the price point is manageable - previous drugs released have been so costly, Patterson-Smith said, she heard of one family that had to get a second mortgage on their house to pay for one year of medication. Regardless of cost, the drug has been worth it, making Smith's life better.

"[Ava has always said cystic fibrosis is] not going to stop me from doing anything I want to do. So from that perspective I think she's still, she's definitely going to treat things the same way but now it might be a little bit easier," said Patterson-Smith. "Listening to her talk about how she felt, I do think it has made things easier for her."

"I just hope that people have as good of results as I'm having with this drug because it's amazing," said Smith. "I'm so happy."

cough in awhile."

"I've done many studies at SickKids, so I just kind of thought it was another regular study, I wasn't really expecting much," said Smith. "I wasn't really nervous, I wasn't expecting much. But then, wow, was I surprised."

As part of the study, Smith visits the study team at SickKids every three months, and has phone check-ins every six weeks. Because she was part of the study, she is able to continue taking the medication free of charge for an additional 24 months - as is the other participant, even if they were on the placebo - to help bridge the gap between the study end and the time it might take for the drug to be approved in Canada.

"It truly is a miracle drug," said Smith.

"Before Trikafta, I actually was going down a bit of a downslope," she said. "I was getting admitted to the hospital, it was almost twice a year now, for two weeks, basically a tune-up. Those were becoming more common. They weren't as common as when I was younger but they were starting to get more

common. My [pulmonary function tests] were getting lower than they had been before. I just wasn't feeling the best. But now things are feeling better."

A tune-up, said Patterson-Smith, involves a two-week stay at the hospital in which cystic fibrosis patients are treated with antibiotics to address the various infections that are always growing inside the lungs of a person with CF.

"Ava hasn't been on antibiotics for a long, long time, whereas ... we permanently had a prescription for antibiotics because she needed to take them so frequently because of the infections that were always growing in her lungs. She hasn't needed antibiotics for two years now."

Smith is known throughout the local community as being an active, enthusiastic athlete, and is considered by her SickKids team to be a healthier patient.

"Truthfully, I think there were a lot of people who would have not known that Ava has CF," said her mom. "She's never let it stop her from doing anything. She never let it get in her way. At the clinic we always joked that we weren't sure, the chicken or the egg, was she so healthy because she was so active or was she active because her lungs allowed her to be. We kind of settled that it was a reciprocal relationship."

Smith's pulmonary function has never been consistently extremely low.

"There's a woman in Etobicoke with CF who ran a half marathon or triathlon, this was many, many years ago, when Ava was only about six years old," said Patterson-Smith. "I remember them showing us that article and saying, this is going to be you, Ava. You're going to keep your lungs healthy through all your exercise."

Still, said Patterson-Smith, the statistics for people living with cystic fibrosis can be daunting.

"You just read various statistics, even now, a child born with CF, has only a 50 per cent

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Councillors to vote virtually

from page 1

Hills since 2014 and previously served as warden in 2017.

"County council has reached the mid-point of our term, and the second half of the term will likely involve significant changes and challenges, as to how municipal government operates and delivers services," Devolin said. He and Danielsens were each given 10 minutes to address their colleagues. Councillors received a service delivery review for the county and its lower-tier municipalities from Toronto-based consulting firm StrategyCorp later that day.

"COVID-19, evolving regulatory requirements, rapid population growth, both seasonal and permanent, tight labour markets and future diminishing federal and provincial funding will require an evolution of how municipal governments will function in the near and distant future," Devolin said.

"Service delivery reviews, asset management, working from a distance, using technology and connectivity while moving to a more paperless approach to operations offer an opportunity to take a proactive stance to shape and form the county for the future," he continued. "... Municipal leaders must be mindful to not lose the benefits of the current structure and operations, while endeavouring to achieve actual positive results in the changes that may be considered."

In her speech, Danielsens acknowledged it would be unusual for a member of county council to be warden for three consecutive years, and said she thought maintaining consistency during the ongoing pandemic would be helpful for council.

"I do acknowledge fully that extending my term might seem rather extraordinary to some," Danielsens said. "... I do believe I've served the county well in an open, transparent and business-like fashion and my focus has always been on ensuring that the business at hand is taken care of, and I follow the agreed-upon will and path of council."

"I know that you've all had difficult times as a result of the pandemic, the workload has been immense, and we've all just had to slog through it," she continued. "... For me, one of the most compelling arguments for me continuing the position is continuity, and I've made this point to all of you. I believe that continuity is vital. We do remain under a state of local emergency, and I've been working closely with all of the department heads since early March. And continuity during such times brings consistency in decision-making, and I truly believe that it's helpful for staff as they've been managing their way through these uncertain times."

Councillors will be submitting virtual ballots with their votes, and the 2021 warden will be announced at an inaugural meeting on Dec. 15.



County councillors hear speeches from Minden Hills Mayor Brent Devolin and Algonquin Highlands Deputy Mayor Liz Danielsens, both of whom would like to serve as warden for 2021, during a Nov. 25 online meeting. / Screenshot

Toy collection for Christmas hampers

The Minden Community Food Centre will be collecting toys for its annual Christmas hamper program at the Minden Hills Community Centre this Saturday, Dec. 5. Toys can be dropped off between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. and amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they are to be placed on tables that will be set up outside. Volunteers will then move the toys inside, where they will be stored for a two-week period.

Birdhouse sales benefit Legion

Tom Burke, who has raised thousands of dollars through the sales of birdhouses since the beginning of the pandemic has reached another \$500 milestone. He donated the latest \$500 of proceeds from the birdhouse sales, which are by donation, to the Minden Legion last week. Seen here, Burke, right, with Minden Legion second vice-president Dave Camelon. /Submitted photo



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A collection of farewell thoughts for longtime editor, Jenn Watt

I have always been slightly intimidated by Jenn. I immediately recognized her fierce intelligence when she arrived for an interview for the reporter's job. She was 20 years my junior and I would ostensibly be her "boss" but her strengths matched my insecurities.

I knew I'd be a fool not to offer her the job. But first I needed to make sure she really wanted it.

"Before you head back to Toronto," I told her at the end of the interview, "I want you to drive around Haliburton. What you see is what you'll get. It's not going to change. There won't be any more young people for you to become friends with. There won't be any more social or cultural opportunities. Do you really want to live here?"

Thank goodness she said yes. Because what I learned about Jenn is that her courage is complemented by an intense empathy. She cares deeply about people, which is why she worked so hard to provide them with a voice. In everything she did, she made the newspapers, and the county, better. She was a wise and wonderful steward of the papers' proud history. Thank you!

Martha Perkins

Former editor of the Echo and Times

Sitting at the helm of a newspaper with over 135 years of history is quite a responsibility, but it's something that Jenn has done with grace, good humour and a keen sense of community for over a decade. Thank you, Jenn, for all the amazing opportunities you've given us to share stories from our community's history within the pages of the paper and for collecting community stories for future historians! Good luck in all your new adventures, and keep writing!

Kate Butler

I have had the pleasure and privilege of dealing with Jenn for all the years that she has been at the *Echo and Times*.

When news happened, she was the first person you wanted to contact. You knew that:

- She cared deeply about our community
- She wanted to build it up, not pull it down
- She would get the facts and double check them
- She was passionate about protecting:
 - Our environment
 - Our arts and culture
 - All the people in the community, especially the vulnerable
 - Our sense of community

In all those years I have never heard her raise her voice, speak in anger or get frustrated even though she constantly dealt with deadlines and pressure.

Jenn, thank you so much for all you have done for our community. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours and hope that our paths cross frequently.

Paul MacInnes

For as long as I've made Haliburton County home and been active on local economic and environmental justice issues, one journalist, in particular, has always been conspicuous by her presence.

Jenn Watt has consistently made it her business to amplify minority voices and help communicate information, ideas, and campaigns designed to make life in our neck of the wood better for this generation and those who will follow.

At a time when truth and accuracy have become endangered species and people get more and more of their information from social media rumour than fact-checked newspapers, our amazing crew of local community newspapers have served us very well. A big shout out to Jenn for being such a



key part of making that happen.

Of course, there are others who will follow in Jenn's footsteps but they have some very big shoes to fill.

Jenn, you are respected by all those whose paths you have crossed and everyone wishes you all the best for what comes next. Check in from time to time so that your fans know what you are up to and how you're doing.

Terry Moore

My time working with Jenn began almost exactly 11 years ago. It was November, it was grey and it was cold. However my welcome to the *Haliburton County Echo* could not have been any warmer.

Jenn went out of her way to embrace me and show me the ropes of journalism. Not just in a local sense, but in the way a brilliant and passionate editor takes a young novice under their wing. Jenn was just that, brilliant and passionate.

Over the next nine years Jenn taught me something new every day and more importantly, she became my friend.

Under her leadership the *Echo/Times* won numerous provincial and national awards, maintained its impeccable reputation in the community and perhaps most importantly, she never let me miss a deadline. However what I will remember most about Jenn is our friendship, a friendship that lasts to this day. Jenn and I worked side by side and had hundreds if not thousands of laughs together, shared stories, discussed the direction of the newspaper and much more.

Jenn, I wish you all the best in your future endeavours and wherever the road in life may take you. The community was so lucky to have you at the helm of these newspapers and we will never forget you.

Angelica Ingram

I first met Jenn Watt when she phoned me in 2007 to ask me to deliver a keynote speech at the 20th anniversary of the Dec. 6 vigil and awareness raising of violence against women event. From that first conversation with Jenn to our ongoing relationship that has continued to this day, through the years Jenn and I have found ourselves holed up in the Kozy Korner restaurant, or our respective offices discussing matters of great community importance. Often our conversations were dictated by the work I was/am doing at the time, whether it has been poverty alleviation/awareness, food insecurity, women's rights, community programs, youth mental wellness, or most recently how to navigate a global pandemic

and keep love and kindness at the forefront. Jenn would always find and in fact encourage my deep passions regarding these and many more topics, which not only helped me further my own personal and professional goals, but offered a place where I could be heard both on and off the record with deep resolve and a shared desire to help educate, inform and maybe even make a difference.

Jenn began her role as editor at roughly the same time I began working in community/social services within Haliburton County, and it feels like the two of us grew professionally together, often spending a little longer in our meetings to chat about living and working in rural Ontario and the highs, lows and in-betweens of navigating communications and conversations with deep care and mindfulness.

Thank you Jenn for always being open to difficult discussions around the deeper needs of our rural community and for never shying away from the issues at hand, being brave and professional enough to communicate them with great care and for being a support to not only my work, but our community.

Nancy Brownsberger

I first met Jenn Watt in the summer of 2008 in Minden at the first "Logs, Rocks and Steel" triathlon. She was very new to the area and to her reporting gig with the *Echo*. Jenn was friendly and inquisitive in our brief chat and I remember asking her if she had had a chance to enjoy some of the benefits of living in the Highlands. She laughed and said that at that point, her job was taking up most of her time.

Jenn has a wonderful sense of humour and had lots of opportunity to use it in 2015 as part of a five person "Haliburton Reads" panel co-sponsored by the Haliburton County Public Library and Canoe FM. We had a lot of fun over five or six weekly tapings, arguing and laughing, and I got to see another side of Ms. Watt.

In late 2015, a large group of people came together and agreed that an application should be made to sponsor a Syrian refugee family. Jenn was one of eight individuals that agreed to help manage this daunting project on behalf of the community. Her generosity, compassion and talent during those months were formidable and in September of 2016, the Wiso family arrived and continue to call Haliburton, home.

Thanks for everything, Jenn, it's been a treat.

Sean Pennylegion

It was a beautiful June day when I drove from Toronto to Haliburton to become the 2016 summer reporter. Immediately, I felt right at home. This wasn't because I'm a country girl at heart, or love freshwater lakes and rolling hills, it was because of Jenn Watt.

From the moment I walked into Jenn's office – nervous and unsure of what exactly it meant to be a reporter – Jenn exuded a heady mix of warmth, competence, and professionalism. She overlooked my lack of training in essential small-town newsroom skills, and instead focused on my positive qualities. In short, Jenn brought out the best in me, and this wasn't just confined to the written word. She taught me, through her example, how to be fair yet kind, how every story matters, how the balancing act between being a reporter and a citizen requires large doses of tact, humour, and grace. Thank you, Jenn. That summer in Haliburton County changed my life's course, and I'm certain I'm not the only one who feels this way.

Angela Long

We have been blessed to have had Jenn as editor of our local newspapers for the last decade. She has been competent, caring, curious, and connected to our community. Under her watch, I've been confident that the news we read has been reported accurately and fairly. I've appreciated the deep interest that she has demonstrated in the history of our communities and the light she has shone on my personal endeavours in local family history research. I wish Jenn all the best in her next chapter and will miss her very much.

Adele Espina

We were so happy to share in Jenn's enjoyment of Barnum Creek Nature Reserve where she went for some Vitamin N (Vitamin Nature) and found plenty of it there. Thanks Jenn for your wonderful editorial! Much luck in your new journey.

Leopoldina and Margaret Dobrzensky

How do you say thank you to one whose work means so much to all of us, the *Echo* readers?

Week by week we receive perspective on significant issues, local or further afield. Her command of the English language is noted and appreciated.

Jenn has been patient about my somewhat indecipherable scrawl since I write longhand, and maintained her good humour throughout.

I was so touched by her coming to photograph and write up my 80th birthday.

Jenn earned my gratitude for her script of Earl's accomplishments following his death. When I felt useless, thinking my necessity ended, Jenn was kind enough to come and see me. I thought my resignation would be accepted, but instead I was given encouragement to go on even on a monthly basis for the column.

I am so proud to be part of the *Echo*, pleased by its established quality so ably carried on by Jenn Watt. I'll miss you Jenn.

Eleanor Cooper

I was surprised at Jenn's announcement that she was leaving her post at the paper to pursue other interests. She has been such an integral part of the local media scene and doing the job so well that the prospects of change seemed remote.

She helped build this community with her very competent and caring editorial and writing skills. She was always open to new stories, ideas, and mobilized resources to tell those stories. I appreciate how she supported and showcased the work of local organizations such as the Haliburton County Folk Society and businesses such as mine.

Above all else she is a very nice person, a true Canadian and an expression of Destination Canada's (our country's top marketing organization) recent campaign – "Canadians didn't invent nice; they just perfected it." Jenn is perfection.

Looking forward to meeting Jenn on the street, at a concert or more likely in the library.

Barrie Martin

Thank you, Jenn, for helping to keep local journalism thriving in a time when many small communities are losing their local papers. You have helped to keep Haliburton County informed about our community – whether reveling in our successes, or showing us what we need to do better.

Erin Kernohan-Berning

Because we are not newspaper editors, most of us never realize the special skills and the time requirements needed to do such an important job. Dear Jenn, in your profession you have certainly surpassed those requirements, and we are all profoundly grateful.

But there comes a time in each of our lives when things change, and we know that we too must move on. For these several years, as editor of our local newspaper, you have helped to make our local newspaper, you have helped to make our lives richer and more informed. We have all appreciated your natural talent and unique sense of how to present our weekly news, as you have worked with the *Echo's* wonderful staff. Under your editorial leadership, the whole community has been brought right into our homes - what an incredible legacy! Haliburton has always been my cherished home, and each week I have looked forward to connecting my community through the *County Echo*, and I'm sure it will continue to be an important part of those connections.

Of course, it will not be the same. We will all miss you Jenn. And as a neighbour to the *Echo* office, I will miss you, and can only wish you all the best as you leave to pursue your library interests - in which you will also excel.

We say goodbye regretfully, but with every good wish and kind remembrance.

Bill Gliddon

I remember that when Martha Perkins packed her bags, we all held our collective breath about how this young sprite that she had consigned her beloved paper to, this Jenn Watt, barely dry behind the ears, how would she manage?

Time has validated Martha's decision. Jenn has done herself proud. She has done us proud. The existence, let alone quality, of our local newspapers make us the envy of many small rural communities. They nurture our culture and our economy. We better understand who we are when we see ourselves reflected, the big and the little, the old and the new, each week.

I'm sure I speak for others when I wish Jenn every success in her new venture. I am grateful that it will not take her away from us. I look forward to seeing how she seeps into the community when she is free to abandon her journalist's pen.

Fay Martin

I have had the pleasure to once again work alongside Jenn since my return to the papers in early 2014. I was very impressed with Jenn and her pro-

fessionalism soon after she arrived in Haliburton in 2008, so it came as no surprise to me that when Martha Perkins left the papers in 2009, that Jenn was Martha's pick as her successor. And what a great decision that was!

Jenn is smart, kind, well organized, dedicated, thoughtful, a patient listener, (obviously a great writer) and I'm happy to say never late with a deadline! That's right, never late with a deadline, no matter how much pressure she was under (and that pressure is constant and never ending).

I could write so much about Jenn and her daily dealings with staff, subscribers, customers, politicians, printers – and me – but I don't have enough space or time. However, I will share what will likely be one of my most enduring and proud moments as a co-worker with Jenn.

It was last Christmas at our annual freelancer potluck. Staff prepare their favourite dish or dessert to share a tasty meal and fellowship with our freelance writers and contributors. You can tell that this is a special event for Jenn – she talks freely with everyone, and moves about the room like a dancer clearly enjoying every moment. When the formal part of the affair started Jenn took over and effortlessly introduced everyone in the room, talking about their column, or their role at the papers. There were about 20 people in the room and with no notes (yes, no notes) and no "ums" or pauses, Jenn had the room in her hands. It was like great theatre – watching everyone glow as they were in the spotlight.

I was very proud of Jenn that day and will always be proud of her.

David Zilstra

My sources, which are always top notch and very reliable, tell me that you're a bit of a fan of "The Agenda," the program I've hosted on TVO for the past 15 seasons. I'm delighted to hear that. I've heard about your most fascinating career change. Coincidentally, as I write this, our program last night was all about how the public library has become an integral part of the community even more, given the challenges of the current pandemic. So you're moving into another area that has huge importance for our communities.

In any event, I wanted to add my name to the chorus of others who are congratulating you for the footprints you've left in journalism over the years. Whether one works at the *New York Times* or the *Haliburton County Echo*, the principles of accuracy, fairness, and commitment to printing the best available version of the truth we can find are constant. I take my hat off to you for making that important contribution to your readers and their communities. Best of luck in your next great adventure!

Steve Paikin
TVO

**Good luck Jenn,
we will miss you!**

From readers on Facebook

Comments have been edited for clarity and length.

The end of an era. You will be sadly missed. All the best on your future adventure. You will be great!

John Teljeur

Always appreciated the well-written articles and your support for so many ventures in the community. I wish you well!

Jane Taylor Eastwood

Exciting news for Jenn! She has been a wonderful supporter of our Haliburton Hospital Auxiliary and wish her much happiness!

Tracey Lear

You have made such an impact to the papers and the place itself. Wishing you all the best in the next phase and as a reader, and community member, passing along my thanks.

Katy Francis

Thanks for all the support you gave to the Haliburton Red Wolves. You helped put us on the map! The pics and write-ups were great.

Rick West

I met Jenn Watt soon after I arrived. I was impressed: this bright professional knew her town, knew her stuff and certainly, knew journalism. Jenn

Watt will be missed. She's left the *Echo* in good hands. I wish Jenn only good things in all of her tomorrows.

Joan Ransberry

Heartfelt thanks to Jenn for always having a well-balanced view and for her many years of service!

Amanda Virtanen

I am blessed in making a positive connection with you. Thank you for being open and free from judgment.

Barb Rosen



An important message from SIRCH Community Services:

With winter's arrival and the pandemic creating additional financial hardship and isolation, SIRCH is very concerned for the most vulnerable and at-risk people living here.

Before COVID, we were producing 250 - 300 prepared & frozen meals a month and distributing them throughout the county to people who needed them the most.

And then, COVID hit and the demand for prepared meals skyrocketed...

“ *"I am a single mom and was laid off due to COVID. I can't stand long enough to prepare decent meals for my 6 and 4 year old daughters because I am recovering from surgery. Money is very tight and it's hard to add vegetables to each meal. SIRCH's meals have been a godsend to me and my girls."* **”**

With help from the community, SIRCH has made and given out over 23,000 meals, soups and fruit, FREE, since March.

It's essential that we continue to produce a greater number of healthy meals to meet the urgent need in Haliburton County.

You can help make it happen.

Please give to SIRCH's Gifts from the Heart campaign today.

Thank you.



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"A long-time friend of mine suffers from the early stages of dementia but still lives on her own. She can't follow recipes very well these days, and I can't help her cook anymore because of COVID risks. She started getting frozen meals from SIRCH in April. Now I don't have to worry about her not eating properly. She just heats the meals and enjoys. Sometimes she also gets apple crisp and loves that. Amazing."



"My neighbour Jim rarely leaves the house anymore due to depression, and all he has to cook on is one hotplate. When I found out about SIRCH's meals, I started to bring him a couple a week. Now he looks forward to them-especially the roast beef. He asked me to thank you for him"



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☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$_____

☐ I wish to make a monthly donation on my credit card. Amount \$_____

☐ Cheque enclosed (payable to SIRCH Community Services)

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Card Number: _____ Card Expiry Date: _____

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Highlands Summer Festival postpones announcement

The organizers of the Highlands Summer Festival are postponing any announcement about a 2021 season. Typically, around Christmastime, the festival’s board makes an announcement of the productions planned for the upcoming summer, at a gathering which is also an appreciation event for the theatre festival’s volunteers.

“As you know, this has not been a usual year, and so our volunteer appreciation and season announcement at McKeck’s has not taken place,” reads a release from festival organizers. “The board of directors regrets missing this opportunity to meet with and thank our many volunteers, who are such a vital part of the Highlands Summer Festival. We also missed the excitement and anticipation that accompanied artistic producer Scot Denton’s announcement of the details of the upcoming season.”

The festival’s 2020 season was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it had been hoped the shows that had been planned for this past summer would go on in 2021 instead.

“And, even though we can’t make a season announcement, we are still really enthusiastic about the summer of 2021!” the release reads. “We are working within the challenges and uncertainties presented by a pandemic to

“... we are still enthusiastic about the summer of 2021.”

— HIGHLANDS SUMMER FESTIVAL BOARD

come up with innovative options that are both entertaining and safe for patrons, cast, and crew. We are exploring under the stars, under canvas, and under various roofs for a venue to host a season that may be similar to prior seasons, something completely different, or a bit of both. So many exciting possibilities.”

In the meantime, festival fans can check out a memories video on the festival website at www.highlandsummerfestival.on.ca

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				8	6			
					7	5		
		5						3
				2			3	5
9				6				
		8	1		4		6	
						4		
	7	1			5		2	8
8					9			

Level: Advanced

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Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 18

TLDSB equity task force lifts off

by JENN WATT
Editor

The following are brief reports of items discussed at the board of trustees meeting of Trillium Lakelands District School Board on Nov. 24.

The school board has taken the first necessary steps to get their equity task force off the ground, with plans to conduct a student and staff census and hire third-party consultants to create policies and procedures ensuring a safe and inclusive learning and working environment.

Dave Golden, superintendent of learning, gave context to the initiative, pointing out in his report that “in order to provide meaningful educational experiences and opportunities to our students, we must understand the culture, beliefs, and identities of our students, and embed into our practices a lens of equity, high student achievement and well-being.”

School boards must also comply with provincial standards on identifying and monitoring systemic racism by Jan. 1, 2023 under the Anti-Racism Act.

The task force will consult stakeholders about current programs and practices, gather information on student populations and area communities, locate barriers hindering success, inclusion and wellbeing, and create programs and resources.

A smaller working group will “take on the responsibility of creating documentation and procedures, communicating with contracted partners, and completing action items in a timely manner,” Golden’s report states.

The superintendent told the trustees that an application had been made to the Ministry of Education for \$50,000 to collect the necessary demographic data and that a third party would be contracted to do the work of the staff census and student census.

“We have a wonderful consultant group that we know is very experienced in this area that we know will give us some great direction and help us do some analysis of some of the data as well,” he said.

The staff census is to be conducted in the winter and the student census in the fall.

The task force will meet for the first time in December.

Making way for mental health support

Director of education Wes Hahn said a process was underway to ensure that mental health support workers can get into schools, which currently have strict rules around who is allowed in, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“It is not an easy time to manage as a family who is struggling or a student who is struggling and we will continue to offer those [mental health] supports and we are looking at ways ... through special education and mental health to make sure that we have a crisis support plan, if workers need to get into our schools to see students who are in crisis or need additional support, they’re going to get in,” he said.

Hahn said work was currently underway to make that happen and that local agencies would be contacted.

Student success continues to be high with octoblocks

Credit accumulation for the last “octoblock” was 97.7 per cent, superintendent of learning Katherine MacIver said. Secondary students have been studying in an intensive format with one class offered at a time. The intention is to keep class cohorts separate as a precaution against COVID-19. The first octoblock had a success rate of 98 per cent.

“I know someone asked what happened to the other two per cent? We’ve identified a couple of areas where we can provide more student support around credit accumulation,” she said.

Hahn said the current model is working well for many, allowing for better connections between students and teachers and allowing for more time to see projects through.

“There are positives to this and certainly is helping us from an engagement point of view, a mental health point of view, there’s lots of good factors to this,” he said.

New Cases Reported Today		
0	1	8
Haliburton	KawarthaLakes	Northumberland

Total Confirmed Cases to Date			
27	200	94	321
Haliburton (HAL)	Kawartha Lakes (CKL)	Northumberland (NTH)	HKPRDHU

COVID-19 Contacts, Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths by County							
County	Cases Not Resolved	Cases Resolved	Current High-Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Deaths among Confirmed Cases	Deaths among Probable Cases
Haliburton	1	26	6	0	1	0	0
Kawartha Lakes	7	174	15	0	11	19	13
Northumberland	26	67	89	0	4	1	0

HKPR COVID-19 cases updated

Tuesday's update by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit reported no new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Haliburton County. One previously reported case in the county has been transferred to another health unit. Currently there is one local case that is not resolved, with 26 cases resolved and six current high-risk contacts. /Screenshot from HKPRDHU website



Cheering on generosity

Haliburton Highlands Secondary School Interact Club members Megan Klose, from left, and Logan Heaven wave to passing cars during their special festive toy drive on Sunday, Nov. 29 on Bobcaygeon Road in downtown Minden. The group of Grade 12 students, which included Daniella Meraw and Jessica Lee, were there from 12 to 2 p.m. and accepted cash, toys, hygiene products, clothes and various other items. / DARREN LUM Staff

AH offers fire safety tips for winter

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing, some normally seasonal residents may be choosing to live in their cottages and seasonal homes for the first time this winter, and Algonquin Highlands' fire chief has some safety tips for those choosing to do so.

"Cottages and other seasonal homes are vulnerable to unsafe conditions that can arise over the winter such as smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that no longer work, and chimneys that have become blocked," said fire chief Jonathan

Wilker in a press release. "Those staying in cottages and seasonal homes should check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and batteries in case they need replacing."

Other tips include ensuring 911 signs are kept visible, and ensuring all entryways and exits are clear of snow to allow escape in case of fire. This includes making sure windows are not frozen shut so they can be used as a method of escape in an emergency. Private roads and driveways should be kept clear of snow in case they need to be accessed by emergency

vehicles, and it's suggested that extra warm clothes and blankets be added to emergency kits.

Additionally, residents are advised to create and practise a home escape plan, and are reminded that generators should never be used inside a building, as they can cause carbon monoxide to build up.

Staff

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Community Events

Send your events listing to
Pat Lewis at classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

Ryan Vanlieshout in the Main Hall

Presented by Royal Canadian Legion Branch 129-Haliburton
When: Saturday, Dec. 12,
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion, Main Hall
Cost: \$10
Ticket can be purchased ahead of time at the Haliburton Legion in the Clubroom Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Monday to Saturday 2 to 6 p.m. starting on Monday, Nov. 2 or online with PayPal at haliburtonlegion.com. Tickets will be sold at the door at the night of the event as well.
Social distancing will be assured and masks are required to be worn until you reach your seat.
For Information contact: www.aliburtonlegion.com

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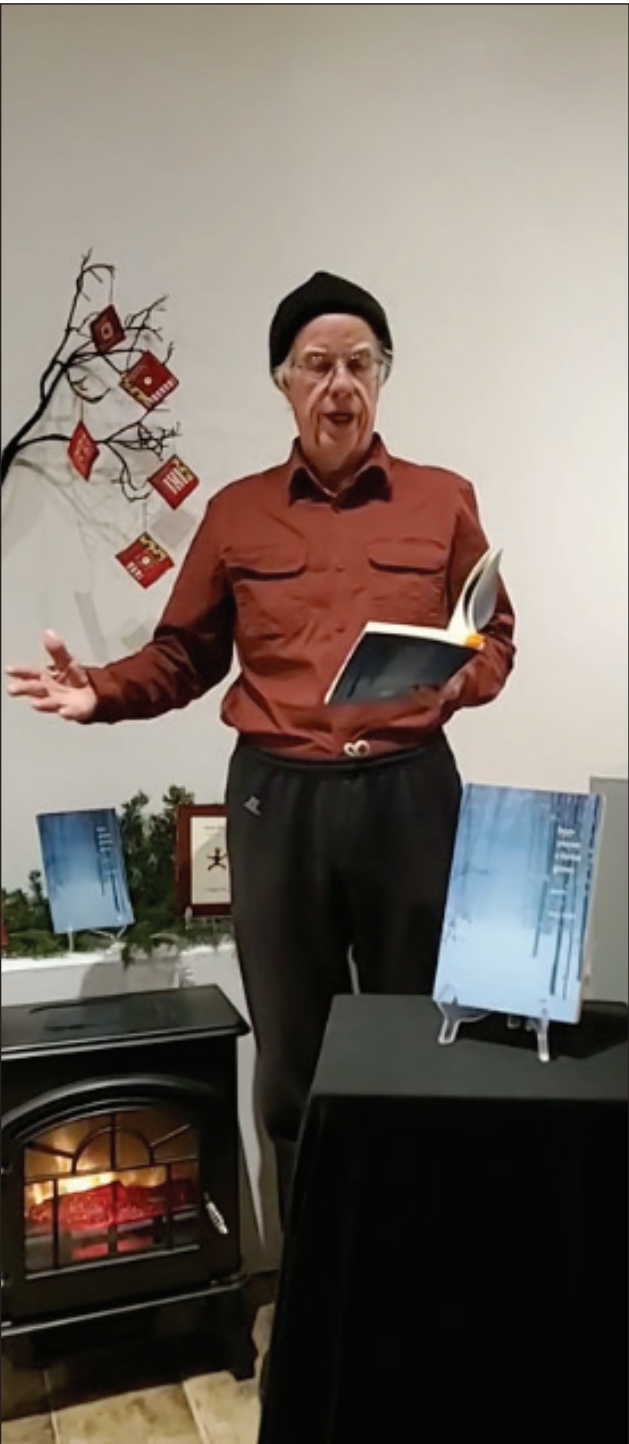
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to find out more or to register.



Poetry reading broadcast online

Local poet Doug Smith read from his new volume *From Smoke A Forest Grows* on Nov. 26 through the first live video event broadcast by the Rails End Gallery and Arts Centre via Facebook. All four of Smith's volumes of poetry are available at Rails End Gallery in person and online at www.railsendgallery.com/shop, or at Ethel Curry Gallery and Master's Book Store while Abbey Gardens is carrying *From Smoke A Forest Grows*. The poetry reading is available to watch on the Rails End Gallery Facebook page. /Screenshot

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3	4	7	5	8	6	1	9	2
1	6	9	2	3	7	5	8	4
2	8	5	4	9	1	6	7	3
4	1	6	9	2	8	7	3	5
9	5	2	7	6	3	8	4	1
7	3	8	1	5	4	2	6	9
5	9	3	8	7	2	4	1	6
6	7	1	3	4	5	9	2	8
8	2	4	6	1	9	3	5	7



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Passed away suddenly at home in Niagara Falls on Tuesday, November 24, 2020, at the age of 64.

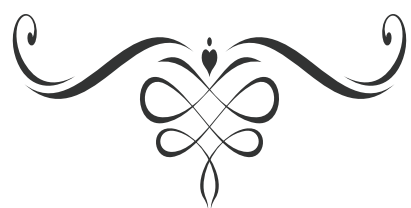
Dear father of Tammy, Angella (Brent), Michelle (Josh), Aimee (Curtis), Josh (Melisa), Dustin and Caleb. Loving grandfather of Alannah, Jamie, Bethany, Rylee, Isaac, Callum, Trinity, Elson, Tara, Nic, Austin, Melanie, Ryan, Nash, Everli, Jaden, Colton, Sadie, Mikaela, Quinn, Lillianna and great grandfather of Raeya and Samantha. Dear brother of Linda, Heather, Tim, Harold, Rob and Kelly, son of the late Clarence, Joan and step-son of Eric. Fondly remembered by his family and friends.

It was Richard's wish for cremation and a Celebration of Richard's Life will be held at a later date.

Memorial Donations to the Hospital for Sick Children or the Ronald McDonald House would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.



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HHHS Board endorses CHC application

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Board received approval from the board to apply to the Ministry of Health for funding of a community health centre. If the Ministry looks favourably on the application, the facility would be housed in the upper floor of the west wing of Hyland Crest scheduled to undergo renovations as soon as the residents are moved to the new wing of the building.

The Ontario Ministry of Health is providing funding for community health centres where the communities can demonstrate the need for such a facility.

The committee will be applying on the basis of the special needs of the area's senior population, which is double the provincial average, as well as a large percentage of low income families.

(more on page 5)



Kinmount lights up!

With the voices of young children filling the air with songs of the season, the Kinmount community Christmas tree was lit Thursday evening. The tree, adjacent to the train station, is one of many colourful displays throughout the community. The Kinmount Santa Claus parade is scheduled for this Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m.



Rotary Club of Minden annual award

Bryan Kernohan named Citizen of the Year

This was one lie Bryan Kernohan didn't mind being told. Under the premise of delivering a speech to the Minden Rotary Club on the Minden Wild Water Preserve and its possible use in the Toronto Olympic bid, Kernohan was actually there to receive the Minden Rotary Citizen of the Year award.

"They sucked me in. I should have known better," laughed Kernohan, although he was quite pleased with the award. "It was pretty surprising and I am grateful."

Kernohan was chosen for his many volunteer efforts including work with the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Scouts and Venturers, The former Haliburton County School Board and the Provincial committee for Partners in Tourism.

Although he was chosen, Kernohan noted that on each of the committees and organizations he has served with, there are always many more volunteers working hard to ensure their success. "Volunteerism is pretty great around here. There are always five or six other people working just as hard or harder out there," he said.

Kernohan served as a trustee, for a term and a half, with the Haliburton County Board of Education, before its amalgamation with Victoria and Muskoka. As well, he has been working as a Scout and Venture



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: The Minden Rotary Club Secretary/Treasurer Gord Graham left, and Acting President Bill Rozelle presented Bryan Kernohan, right, with the 1999 Citizen of the Year award. Kernohan was honoured in recognition of his work with the Chamber of Commerce, the Scouts, and many other community activities.

leader for eight years.

Two years ago, Kernohan joined the Haliburton Highland Chamber of Commerce board of directors and held the office of president, until this year, where he is now past president. He represents the family business, J.A.C. Kernohan. He had enjoyed his work with the chamber, despite the challenges of the last couple of years. He feels that with the addition of more volunteers manning the front office, the Chamber has a much more positive presentation to the public. As well, with the coming addition of the Trail and Tours Network to the Chamber of Commerce office, he thinks the chamber will be an even greater source of expertise and information. "They can trade to us, their presence. It just makes sense," he said.

As well, Kernohan is now part of the Central Ontario group of the Provincial committee for Partners in Tourism. This committee looks at marketing and promotional concepts by various stakeholders partnering together to attract and increase tourism. Kernohan feels that his work with this committee will be beneficial to similar projects in Haliburton County.

Bryan Kernohan was presented his award by Minden Rotary Secretary/Treasurer Gord Graham and Acting President Bill Rozelle.

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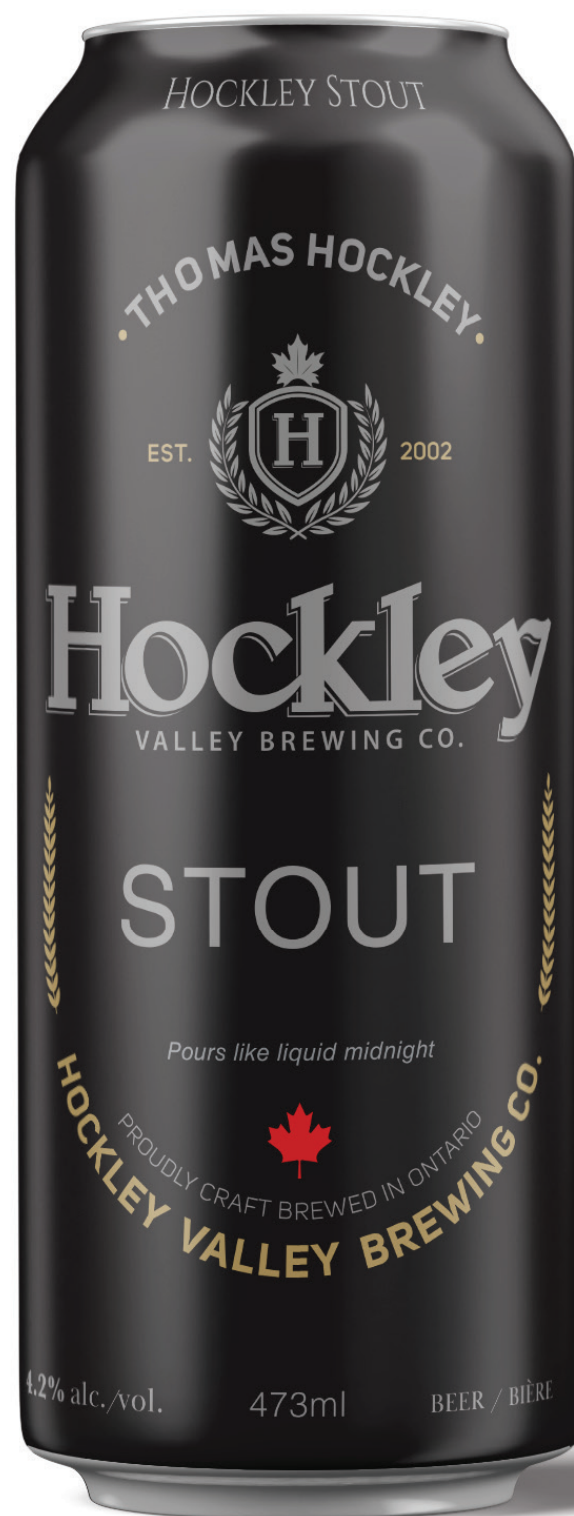
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